

## **MINUTES**

### **LOUISIANA SWEET POTATO COMMISSION**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2009**

**2:00 P.M.**

**THOMAS JASON LINGO COMMUNITY CENTER**

**10284 HIGHWAY 17**

**OAK GROVE, LA 71263**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mark Fields called the meeting to order at 2:10 PM

#### **ROLL CALL**

Mr. René P. Simon called the roll. A quorum was declared.

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mark Fields  
Nelson Bordelon  
Lee Jones  
Kenneth Thornhill  
James Deshotel  
Larry Fontenot  
Vennoy Kinnaird  
Larry Thibodaux  
Kelsey McKoin

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Randy Deshotel  
Commissioner Mike Strain  
Dr. David Himelrick  
Ryan Quebedeaux

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** made by Vennoy Kinnaird and second by Kelsey McKoin to approve the minutes from the June 19, 2008 meeting. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

#### **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

The financial reports from November 30, 2008 were read by Executive Director René P. Simon. Mr. Simon compared the amount collected by the Commission in the prior year as represented by the June 30, 2008 report and the current report.

**MOTION** made by Larry Fontenot second by Kenneth Thornhill to accept the financial report. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

## **REPORT BY CRAIG ROUSSEL ON ASSESSMENT LEVEL**

Mr. Craig Roussel, Director of Horticulture & Quarantine Programs, Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry reported how assessments were calculated. Statewide assessments have been based on a yield of **175 bushels per planted acre**. Planted acreages were verified by LDAF staff using GPS. Mr. Roussel also reported on his Divisions progress in collecting over due invoices from prior years.

As the 2008 harvest year was one of the worst ever due to hurricanes Gustav and Ike, Mr. Roussel reported that a meeting held with LDAF Commissioner Mike Strain, his staff and members of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission regarding assessment levels. At that meeting it was decided to recommend to the Commission that the assessment level only for 2008 be calculated at a rate of **75 bushels per harvested acre**.

Mr. Roussel presented a draft letter to commission that would explain to the industry the reasons for the changes and the method assessments will be calculated for 2008. He would also send a form to the producers for them to report harvested acres. Once the form is returned to the Department, Mr. Roussel's Division will invoice the farmers appropriately. If no form is returned, the producer will be invoiced at a rate of 75 bushels per planted acre.

**MOTION** made by Kenneth Thornhill second by Nelson Bordelon to adjust the average statewide sweet potato yield per acre to 75 bushels per harvested acre for the 2008 crop year. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Members of the Commission expressed their appreciation to Commissioner Strain for his understanding and assistance to the industry during this very troubling time.

## **REPORT BY AL MC DUFF ON THE ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION BUDGET**

Mr. Al McDuff with Diane Allen and Associates reported on successes and progress made promoting Louisiana sweet potatoes. He specifically noted the work done by Ms. Holly Clegg promoting Louisiana sweet potatoes in conjunction with the introduction of her new cookbook. Mr. McDuff provided materials for the Commission demonstrating the work that has been accomplished.

In addition to the above, and in light of the Commission's fiscal condition, Mr. McDuff presented an advertising and promotion budget update. The amount that has been billed and paid to date is \$52,072.02; the amount encumbered or otherwise allocated is \$25,724.07. The remainder that Commission has available to reduce from the prior approved budget is \$67,203.91.

A discussion was held as to which budgeted items are available for reduction, and which were most vital to the industry. Since there are no potatoes to sell at this time, but

also realizing the industry doesn't wish to lose touch with the consumer, the following motions were made.

**MOTION** made by James Deshotel seconded by Larry Fontenot to reduce the advertising and promotion budget by \$67,203.91. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

**MOTION** made by Kelsey McKoin seconded by Larry Fontenot approving a tri-fold, four color brochure to be designed and printed by Diane Allen and Associates. This brochure will provide consumer information while also in support of the Sweet Potato Commission homepage. The amount allocated for this brochure shall not be more than \$10,000. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Other budget reduction considerations such as participation in the PMA trade show in Anaheim, CA this fall was postponed until the April 2009 Commission meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Discussion was held regarding the upcoming National Sweet Potato Convention to be held January 25-27, 2009 in Baton Rouge. It was reported that 230 people have registered to date, but many more will just show up with their registration.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

The Commission will be polled and a meeting set for April 2009.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** made by Larry Fontenot second by Vennoy Kinnaird to adjourn. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.